
In discussing the subject assigned, it is necessary first to make a clear-cut distinction between the two separate programs which have been directed to the field of low-cost housing. We have reference in the one instance to the original Public Works Administration program, initiated in 1934, which during the period from that date until passage of the United States Housing Act in 1937, erected 51 projects in 48 different developments. Obviously, the second program is the current USHA program which began operation as soon after 1937 as state enabling acts made it possible for local communities to meet the requirements of the 1937 Federal Law.

The forty-eight developments erected under the PWA program, often referred to as "demonstration projects," have tended to serve just that purpose. The philosophy of government-subsidized, low-cost housing being new and untried on the American scene, there was insufficient precedent available to aid in the planning stage of the program. Employment conditions prompted haste not in harmony with the need for slow, careful planning. In spite of these obstacles, the general results obtained were so noteworthy in character that the demonstrations were indirectly responsible for the growth of favorable public opinion behind a program so revolutionary in character. However, land acquisition costs and construction costs followed the pattern of private enterprise, to the degree that the projects were forced to attract a clientele considerably above those in the economic scale who were most seriously in need of modern housing. This in turn cast many doubts upon the practical possibilities of realizing Housing aims. As oppositionists reasoned, and rightly so, the greater the development cost - the higher either the rents or the government subsidy. This reasoning has been proven, and is being proven, first

by the fact as mentioned above, that rents in these projects have been above the level of the lower half of the lowest income group; and secondly, by the recent pronouncement of the USHA that maintenance costs on projects must be lowered, and government annual subsidies raised, if the projects are to reach the group of citizens most seriously in need of these facilities.

From the experiences gained in these demonstration projects, the USHA program has profited. By fixing a ceiling of \$1.50 per square foot for land, local authorities have been forced to seek more carefully and deal more sharply for project sites. By determining a second ceiling of \$1250 per room, or \$4000 per unit in construction cost, these authorities have been required to plan more diligently and economically, while at the same time meeting USHA demands for safety, convenience and long life of the project. Experiences gained in the management and maintenance of these demonstration projects have taught architects many short cuts in the planning of new developments, the result of the whole being the stimulation of ingenuity and careful planning to the end that development costs and project management and maintenance costs are lower. This in turn is reflected in the rental rates which will result.

Of the 48 demonstration developments created under the FHA program, fourteen serve Negro tenants exclusively; in three, Negro tenants predominate; three more are almost equally divided in separate units; and in eight projects a minority of Negro tenants are located in predominately white projects. Almost without exception, these projects are serving a clientele consisting largely of the professionals, white-collar workers, and laborers from the higher income brackets within the Negro group, because of the rental schedules resulting from the high development and maintenance costs inherent in the original program. The reason for this can be seen in a study

of rental scales still in existence in many of these early projects.

University Homes in Atlanta accommodates 675 Negro families at an average rent of \$4.39 per room per month for shelter, and an additional \$1.47 per room per month for utilities. This in effect means that a four-room unit will cost \$33.44 per month, including utilities, and this in turn means that the family requiring a four-room unit must have an income of approximately \$1400.00 annually to be eligible for the apartment. In New York, the annual rental would be 401. for the same sized apartment, requiring an income of \$9006. In Atlantic City, the rental would be \$359 and require an income of \$1699; and in Detroit it would be \$311 in rent and \$1555 in income. These are average figures only, based upon the rates originally in effect in each project. In keeping with the new emphasis now being made by Mr. Strauss, however, there is no question but that all will experience drastic reductions. In connection with these figures, however, it is significant to note that the study conducted under the direction of Dr. Robert C. Weaver in 1935 reveals that only 9.6% of the white-collar and skilled workers in the U.S. embraced in the study, had incomes of over \$1500 per year in 1935; 12% of the colored workers in the Middle Atlantic States; 5.6% in the South Atlantic States; and 6.2% in the East South Central States. A review of the incomes of unskilled Negro workers, those for whom low-cost public housing was designed, presumably, would no doubt reveal the remoteness of this class of workers from the realization of public housing aims - at least, as reflected in the FWA experiences thus far. As indicated at the outset, the "demonstration projects" have exposed the weaknesses of the original housing program in the U.S., and the current program is endeavoring to improve upon those condition which have diverted the original purpose for which the projects were intended.

The relationship of income to rental levels in public housing is the first index by which we may determine the Negro's share in the program. President Roosevelt stated that "one-third of the Nation is ill-housed." Judging from income levels of Negroes in the U.S. it would be safe to assume that from two-third to three-fourths of the Negro citizens are poorly-housed. In New Jersey for instance, 72% of the colored workers embraced in our 1935 vocational study, received less than \$1000 per year income. In Newark, 63% of our Negro population of over 40,000, reside in one blighted housing area, with additional hundreds occupying sub-standard houses in all sections of the city. On the basis of need and eligibility, therefore, Negroes are due to receive a large share of public housing benefits.

In turning our attention to the current USHA program, it is necessary first to divest ourselves of any illusions as to the magic this program may possess, in relation to the socio-economic status of the Negro. Public Housing still is in the idealistic, promotional stage where illusive dreams point the way. It is just around the corner from Reality - that stage of the program in which we begin to deal with bricks and men and dollars; that stage of the development when the gentler idealism of mankind is quickly tucked out of sight, and human emotions are exposed to the eroding influence of greed, competition and prejudice. We are now in that transition period, and the degree to which the several phases of the housing program will reach the Negro will depend upon our recognizing our responsibilities during the period. Idealism has prompted the declaration of a non-discriminatory policy by Washington; Reality will determine the degree to which local Authorities will adhere to these principles. Idealism says, "No project shall carry a racial designation in its planning and construction stage." Reality already has convinced us

that one safeguard of the interests of Negro home-seekers lies in such local clarification and designation. Idealism has proclaimed that Negro workers shall be employed in construction work, without discrimination; but Reality, with which we in the League are all too familiar, makes clear that Negroes will not be employed locally unless local pressures are exerted.

At the present writing, there are 256 municipalities or county units in the country having active Housing Authorities. In this entire number, only 20 cities thus far have designated a Negro member to Housing Authorities. The local body, which is the policy-making organization for the entire local program, is appointed by the political heads of the city, from among the so-called "public spirited" citizens from all walks of life. This Authority member is the Noter-plan, labor leader, social worker, potential juror and political maneuverer of the community, and is the same John Q. Public who is represented on the Board of Education and other non-salaried commissions which play a prominent part in determining the culture pattern of a community. His selection to the Housing Authority has been determined more by his enthusiasm than by his knowledge. His presence on the Authority need not mean, and usually does not mean, his blanket acceptance of the democratic ideals of the Washington Authorities. A review of our experiences with ERA, WPA, CCC, and others, will make clear my meaning.

In ignoring the Negro citizen when designating Housing Authority membership, the 256 communities having no Negro members have merely followed the practice which we as Negroes have permitted. In how many cities of the country do our political leaders contend for appointments to non-salaried, policy-making Boards and commissions? To what degree have our magnificent political gestures to secure jobs for janitors, messengers and "special assistants," closed the doors to possible ap-

pointments of this nature? In how many cities are there Negro members of Boards of Education, for instance?

In propounding this last question, we are aware of the analogy existing between public education and public housing. Each is a program for social betterment in a static economic pattern; each is being promoted from public funds for the direct benefit of those unable to provide facilities for themselves, to the end that society as a whole may be protected. Each demands tremendous initial outlay of capital funds and heavy annual subsidy, to erect massive, tax-exempt plants in the name of the municipality; each is administered by a non-salaried, policy-making board appointed by the municipal government; each is manned by administrative and line personnel selected under the rules laid down by the board; and presumably, each is operating for the general public good on a completely non-discriminatory basis. One major difference lies in the fact that in Housing, the Federal government has a direct financial interest and will exercise direct supervision of the program during the life of its equity in the property, and has seen fit to insure us against discrimination by creating a division of Negro Affairs at the outset, and by permitting that division to have a voice in the program development. Upon this one major advantage may we as Negroes build a protective program whereby we may escape in Housing many of the dissatisfactions we have experienced in Public Education.

Although Public Housing is but five years old in the United States, we have the picture of an immense building program embracing 81 projects completed, and 267 more under construction. We see 21,317 new, thoroughly-modern dwelling units in use, and 102,119 more in immediate prospect. We have seen nearly \$130,000,000 spent in the completed program, and nearly \$500,000,000 now out on loan contracts thus far in the new program. Translated in terms of practical

work in the field, it means millions of dollars to be spent in acquiring deteriorated or unused city properties for housing sites; paying fees to appraisers, negotiators, lawyers, surveyors; providing salaries for clerks, stenographers, social workers, executives; and releasing funds for building materials and labor.

To determine the possibilities for employment of Negro workers in the several phases of this program, will require an analysis, step by step. In the early days of an Authority, as skeleton administrative staff is required to collect and correlate the data required in the original application for ear-marking of funds. Unless there is a Negro member of the Authority, or a potent community advisory committee functioning in the community, there is little likelihood that a member of our group will be placed in this early staff. Following the ear-marking comes the quest for building sites, when negotiators are sent into the field to secure options. Appraisers are assigned at the same time, to check each individual piece of property, and from a thorough knowledge of values in the community, give an impartial and accurate appraisal of its marketable value. In each instance, keen knowledge of real estate values and practices are required; and in each instance, the rigid requirements imposed by USHA for its own protection, almost automatically eliminates the local Negro real estate dealer whose experiences have been limited, both as to size and location of operations with which he has been associated. In Newark, we have had the experience of having two colored agents rejected by USHA, only because their limited experience would mitigate against profitable dealing for the Authority.

Title-searching, on the other hand, requires the services of a Title Company, or of lawyers. Obviously, a contract with the former will exclude the Negro worker entirely, whereas in the latter plan which we adopted in Newark, Negro lawyers can expect a share of this

work. Again, in the planning stage, competition among architects is keen, and in the few communities where Negro architects may be found, their experiences have been limited to the type of work which entitles them to scant consideration in the designing of large projects. This phase of the program, however, offers distinct possibilities to the Negro architect if efforts are made locally to have him included on the staff of the board of design or the architectural firm retained for the job. The experience and contacts gained in such placement can be of immeasurable value to the Negro architect as public housing grows in the United States. Relatively the same situation prevails in the other technical phases of the program, such as the surveying, and construction superintendency and inspection, in each of which the qualifications of formal training and field experience are exacted to the degree that the Negro technician, with limited experience, is eliminated. In each field, we in Newark have insisted upon the employment of Negro workers in the subordinate posts, wherever available, in order that they may be in position to absorb experience and make profitable contacts.

In three stages of the project development, there is reasonable expectation for the employment of Negro workers, viz., (1) tenant relocation, calling for individual relations with the families being dispossessed on acquired sites, a knowledge of the whole community, and the ability to persuade landlords to accept marginal workers as new tenants in other areas; (2) demolition work, which has been a source of employment for Negroes largely throughout the country, and (3) the unskilled work in construction. Relatively little pressure will be required to assure employment of Negro workers in these fields because local precedents have been established almost universally which are favorable to our employment.

The real obstacles to employment of Negroes can be found: (1)

in the Authority administrative posts; (2) in the skilled jobs in construction, for two different reasons; and (3) in the tenant selection phase of the program. The Authority administrative posts are the technical and office workers, with reasonable tenure and security, and with decent salaries. The usual opposition to the inclusion of Negro workers in an office set-up applies here and considerable local pressure will be required to break it down.

In spite of the fact that USHA has urged each local Authority to include a non-discrimination clause in each building contract let, here again the will of the local Authority will assert itself. Whether or not such clause will be included, the effectiveness with which it is drafted, and what efforts are made during the construction program to force adherence to its provisions, will depend entirely upon the attitude of the local authority, or the potency of local Negro leadership in forcing the issue. Another side of this particular problem is that which rests with Negro labor. Inasmuch as agreements between USHA and the National Building Trades Council virtually confines all jobs to union labor, the degree to which local Negro labor is identified with the building trades unions will determine their hope for employment. In Newark, for instance, the non-discriminatory clause in our contract specifies a minimum employment of Negroes to represent at least 30% of the total payroll for unskilled labor during any given four weeks' period, and at least 8% of the payroll for skilled labor. Although we have an abundance of organized, unskilled workers, there is a serious dearth of skilled workers with paid-up union cards.

In spite of the contractual safeguard and the abundance of unskilled labor, it has taken pressure from within the Authority to keep the ratio of unskilled labor to the specified level, and at one time the local Authority was forced to threaten suspension of the

work to force the contractor to adhere to this provision. We have never been able to maintain the 5% ratio of skilled workers, because they are not available. According to the terms of our contract, even though Negro workers may not be in the ironworkers', plumbers' or electricians' locals, the specified ratio could be made up by a higher representation among carpenters, bricklayers, cement-finishers, etc. Thus far, we have been able to place but two carpenters and one bricklayer in the first project now under construction, and this situation prevails despite the fact that for two years our Workers' Council has been urging skilled mechanics to prepare for the eventuality which now exists. On the whole, however, reports from all sections of the country indicate that there is no evidence of any attempt to discriminate against Negro labor to any marked degree.

The tenant selection phase of the program requires case work skills, and in the average community, will be composed of but very few workers. Here, the usual professional competition will operate against the Negro worker unless a great deal of emphasis upon Negro participation in the local program has been made. This is a vital part of the whole program, and one upon which we should concentrate our attentions.

At this period of the program development, there is no reason to fear that projects wholly or largely occupied by Negro tenants will have other than Negro management and personnel. The position U.S.H.A. has taken is so unequivocal on this point that no local Authority is likely to plan otherwise. The number of projects now in operation and being planned, is sufficiently imposing to indicate the birth of a new profession for the trained Negro, and it is to the interest of the Urban League to sound out these possibilities in directing its relationship to housing as a new field of employment.

As stated earlier in this paper, the FWA projects housing Negro

tenants exclusively or predominately, number 80 in the total of 51 developments. In 19 of these are Negro managers and staffs. In only one, this being a segregated unit of a larger project in the South, white management is in control. Of the 19 managers in these projects, seven have been designated as "resident managers" or "management aids" serving under white supervision. In each instance this has occurred in the South. In the new USHA program, of 256 communities planning or constructing projects, ninety (90) are building projects intended wholly or partially for Negro occupancy. According to present reports available, this will mean a total of 96 additional projects for Negro occupancy. Twenty-one of these are providing for 50% or less of Negro tenancy and very likely will be under white management, as almost without exception they are single projects in small cities.

At any rate, there is a potential need of 75 trained Negroes, able to meet the requirements of USHA and local Authorities, to take over the responsibilities of Housing Managers. This will mean also at least 75, and perhaps as many as 125, bookkeeper-stenographers as management aids; many accountants; 75 engineers to serve as building superintendents; and from 200 to 600 maintenance workers, mechanics, horticulturists, etc., for maintenance personnel. It certainly behooves the Urban League to become thoroughly acquainted with the personnel requirements, in order that local workers may be prepared for the positions to be made available. It is also well to keep in mind that the figures quoted represent only the demands of those communities which have entered into contract with USHA, but do not include the many which have ear-markings and within the coming months will have many additional projects to add to the statistical reports and personnel requirements.

Aside from its social significance, which needs little discussion is a group of Urban League workers, the field of public housing

presents possibilities of great value to the work in which we are engaged. Bursting suddenly upon the Nation as it has, the surprise value of its sudden emergence and the revolutionary character of the program itself, already have caused the breaking of innumerable precedents and traditions. Public Housing is developing rapidly in the country, and practically under its own momentum. The National and local programs are being administered and directed by persons who are forced to admit that there is no set rule governing the proper direction of the program. Each official is groping for the right answer and the acceptable emphasis. A local advisory group can be as potent in the program direction as the Housing Authority itself, because these officials are striving for public support and approval. If we, as Negroes, permit groups antagonistic to our interests to become the local interpreters, we can expect that the local program will adopt the usual "American way." If we, as was done by Ed Lewis in Baltimore, become the spearhead in the formulation and direction of such citizens groups, the Housing program can point the way to all other social forces in our communities, in achieving the democratic process. USHA has provided the machinery and the safeguards. The rest of the job is ours.